

**Department of Commerce  
Occupational Safety and Health Program  
Fiscal Year 2003 Annual Agency Report**



**Department of Commerce  
Office of Occupational Safety and Health  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 5111  
Washington, DC 20230  
  
Telephone (202) 482-0211**

## Department of Commerce

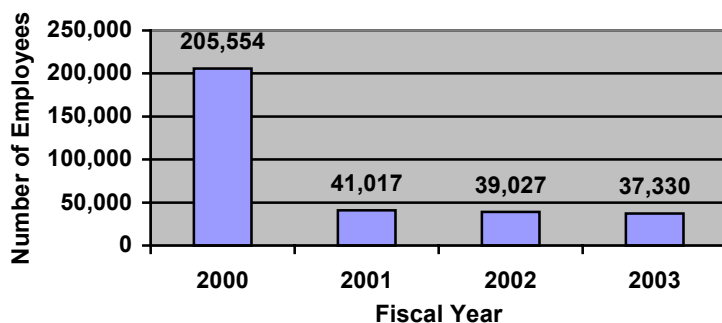
## Occupational Safety and Health Report

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Fiscal Year:   | 2003  |
| Name of Agency   | Department of Commerce  |
| Department   | Office of Occupational Safety and Health, Office of Human Resources Management  |
| Address  | 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW<br>Room 5111<br>Washington, DC 20230   |
| Number of employees covered by this report   | 37,330  |
| Number of Activities covered by this report  | 21  |
| Name of individual responsible for the Commerce Occupational Safety and Health Program (DASHO) | Otto J. Wolff<br>Chief Financial Officer,<br>Assistant Secretary for Administration<br>1401 Constitution Avenue, NW<br>Room 5830<br>Washington, DC 20230<br>(202) 482-4951  |
| Point of contact:  | Richard Hartman, Ph.D., CIH, CSP<br>Director, Office of Occupational Safety and Health, Office of Human Resources Management<br>1401 Constitution Avenue, NW<br>Room 5111<br>Washington, DC 20230<br>(202) 482-0211 |

**Department of Commerce  
Occupational Safety and Health Program  
Fiscal Year 2003 Annual Agency Report**

## I. SCOPE OF REPORT

The Department of Commerce (DOC) Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) program covers the Department's civilian workforce and workplaces worldwide to include our shipboard, aviation and international workforce. The number of employees covered by the 2003 annual report is 37,330<sup>1</sup> (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Total number of employees for the past four fiscal years.

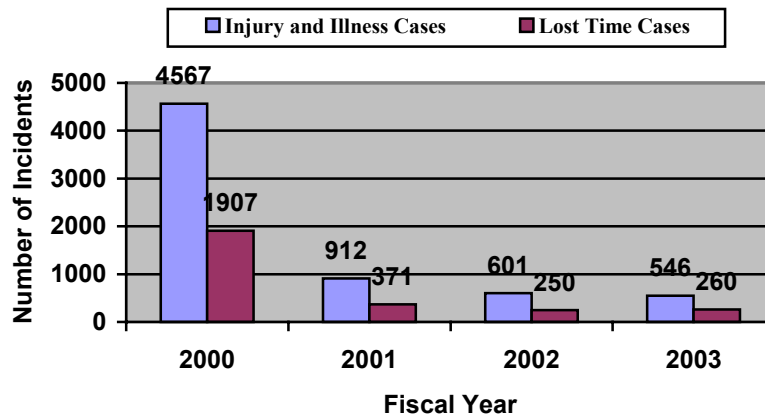
## II. Safety and Health Program Performance

### a. Injuries and Illnesses

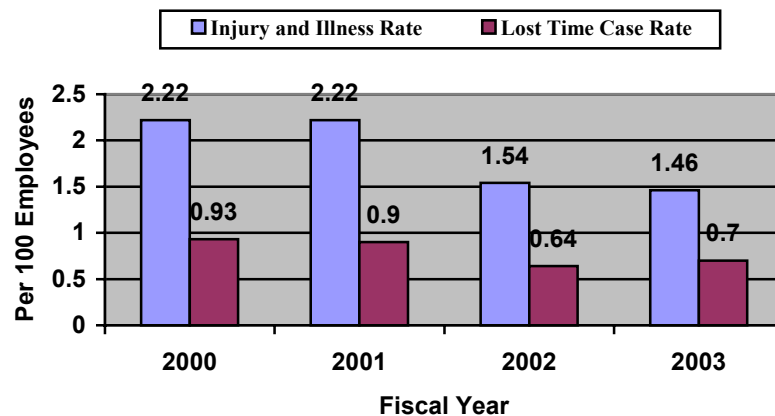
DOC reported 546 injury and illness cases in FY 2003, 260 of which were lost time cases (See Figure 2). This represents a 9.2% decrease of injury and illness claims and a 4% increase of lost time claims from 2002. The significant number of injury and illness claims in FY 2000 was due to the large number of temporary workers hired to conduct the 2000 Decennial Census. The injury and illness case rate for FY 2003 was 1.46 and the lost time case rate was 0.70 (See Figure 3).

---

<sup>1</sup> The significant difference between FY 2000 and FY 2003 is due to temporary workers hired to conduct the 2000 Decennial Census.

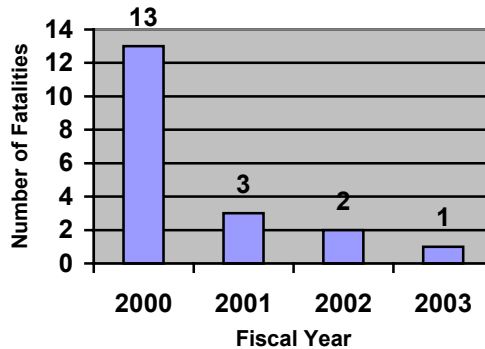


**Figure 2** Total injury and illness cases and total lost time cases for the past four fiscal years.



**Figure 3** Total injury and illness case rate and total lost time case rate for the past four fiscal years.

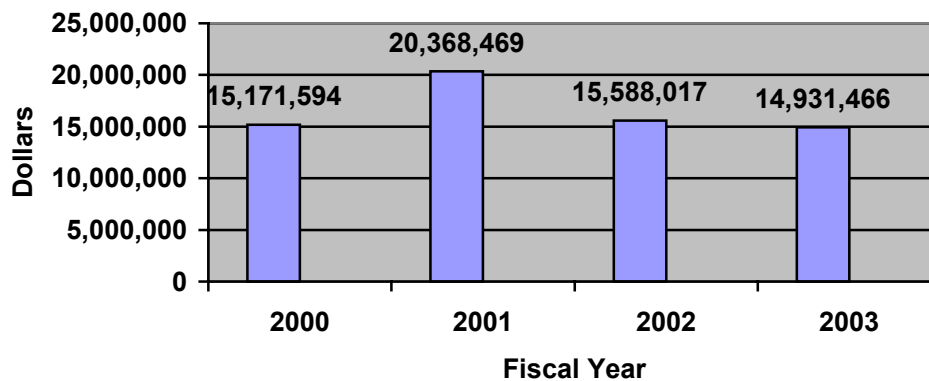
The Department incurred one occupational fatality in FY 2003, where a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) employee was a victim of the Washington, D.C. Sniper in October 2002 while shopping for materials for NOAA's adopt-a-school program. This was part of DOC Partnership in Education, No Child Left Behind, Adopt-A-School Program. The Department of Labor has accepted this death claim. In FY 2002 the Department had two workplace fatalities, both were NOAA employees; one suffered a massive aneurism while piloting an experimental aircraft off the coast of Massachusetts, which resulted in his plane crashing into the ocean, the second employee drowned off the coast of Alaska after a NOAA vessel capsized. Both of these claims have been accepted by DOL. There were three occupational fatalities during FY 2001 and thirteen in FY 2000, all of which were related to the 2000 Decennial Census (See Figure 4).



**Figure 4** Total number of fatalities for the past four fiscal years.

**b. Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) Chargeback costs and Continuation of Pay (COP) costs**

DOC's workers' compensation costs for FY 2003 declined from \$15,588,017 in FY 2002 to \$14,931,466, a decrease of 4.2 percent (See Figure 5).



**Figure 5** Workers' compensation costs for the past four fiscal years.

Continuation of Pay (COP) costs have decreased significantly over the last two years. The costs were \$319,260, \$350,178, \$404,644, and \$1,855,400 in FY 2003, FY 2002, FY 2001 and FY 2000, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The costs in FY 2000 were due to the additional 550,000 temporary

<sup>2</sup> Note: The COP costs for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of FY 2003 are based on an estimate using the data for the first three quarters. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter COP report was not received prior to the publication of this report.

employees hired to conduct the 2000 Decennial Census (See Figure 6).

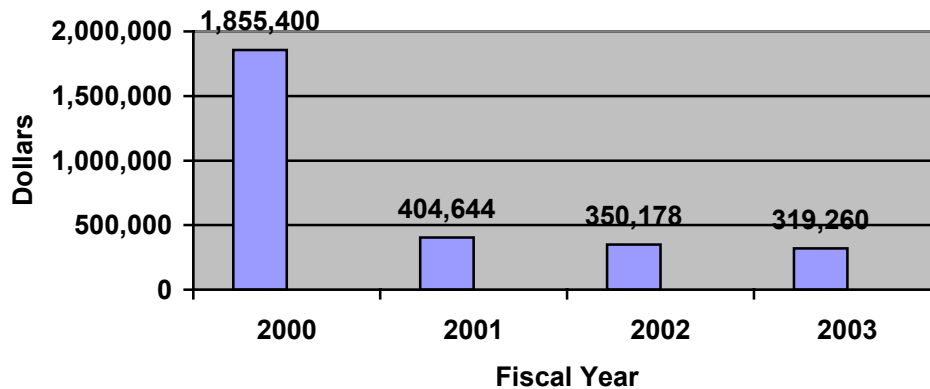


Figure 6 COP costs for the past four fiscal years.

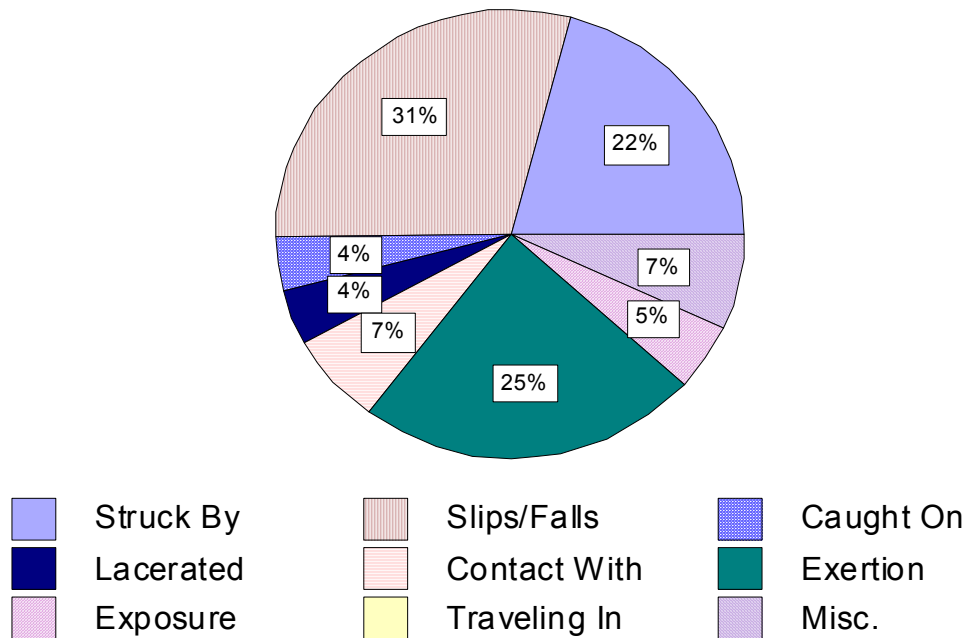
### c. Significant Trends

**Types of Injuries:** Slips, trips, and falls continue to be DOC's main source of injury and illness claims. Information on types of injuries is provided in Figure 7. Key findings are detailed below:

**"Slips/Falls" continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** In FY 2003, 31 percent of total injuries were the result of slips and falls. This is down from 36 percent in FY 2002.

**"Exertion" injuries remain second in frequency for FY 2003.** Exertion injuries represented 25 percent of total injuries for FY 2003. This is an increase from FY 2002, when 20 percent of total injuries were due to exertion.

**"Struck and Contact" injuries are also a concern.** These injuries combined for 29 percent of those reported for FY 2003. This is also an increase from FY 2002, when only 21 percent of total injuries were in this category.



**Figure 7** Injury Type As A Percentage of Total Injuries for 2003.

### III. Major Safety and Occupational Health Program Accomplishments

Several occupational safety and health program objectives were accomplished and initiatives were implemented throughout the DOC during FY 2003 to address injury and illness trends and increase occupational safety and health awareness. The following section provides relevant details regarding the Department's efforts during this period to create a safe and healthful workplace.

#### a. Program Management

##### 1. Leadership

- a. Quarterly Commerce Safety and Health Council meetings were held at Commerce

headquarters with the Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Secretary for Administration as the chair. Safety and health managers and senior management from the major bureaus actively participated in the meetings to resolve critical OSH issues, develop new OSH initiatives, and establish goals and objectives.

- b.** Deputy Secretary Samuel Bodman was the keynote speaker at the July Commerce Safety and Health Council meeting at which he delivered a dynamic and motivating presentation for Departmental safety and health managers and senior management. Dr. Bodman emphasized the importance of conducting a comprehensive OSH program and encouraging employees at all levels to actively participate. He further stated that studies have shown that organizations which have active OSH programs are successful in their performance, have high employee morale, and low injury and illness rates.

## **2. Culture**

- a.** To underscore the importance of top-level support for the Department's OSH program, a special presentation for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, which details their safety and occupational health responsibilities to employees was developed and distributed. The presentation included opening comments from Dr. Bodman, which emphasized the significance of these responsibilities and how they as senior leaders can stimulate workers to work safely and reduce injuries. The presentation was recorded onto compact discs (CDs) and made available to all SES employees.
- b.** A new initiative to create a safety and health culture throughout the Department was introduced to establish an environment in which employees have an understanding and genuine concern for their own health and safety, as well as for their peers' safety. This initiative focused on seven core areas: worker involvement, management commitment, personal accountability, performance management, coworker support, training, and organizational commitment. Safety and health managers from all bureaus were encouraged to incorporate these components into their organizational policies and focus on personal accountability for safe behavior.

## **3. Commitment**

- a.** At the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the OSH program was elevated, with the creation of a separate Safety Division which



reports to an SES supervisor. This restructuring increased the significance and visibility of the NOAA OSH program.

- b.** A thorough review of the NOAA OSH program was conducted by an outside auditing firm to identify areas which need attention to achieve better performance. Over 70 significant recommendations were provided, which included the development and implementation of a new NOAA OSH policy.
- c.** At the Bureau of the Census, Director Charles Kincannon provided OSH messages to all employees via the bureau's intranet to highlight current safety and health issues such as vehicular safety, the requirement to always wear seat belts when on official business, and emergency preparedness to emphasize the bureau's commitment to workplace safety.
- d.** At the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST) a new OSH plan was established which includes specific metrics for tracking OSH progress. Included in this plan is a requirement that all employees have a safety element in their performance plans, all NIST workspaces be inspected in FY 2003, all employees receive at least four hours of OSH training, and a goal to reduce the Lost Work Day Incident Rate by 25%.
- e.** In conjunction with the relocation of over 10,000 employees and contractors to a new building, the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) acquired the services of two certified ergonomists to assist in the design of new workspaces to reduce repetitive motion injuries. Additionally, the PTO Safety and Security Offices developed a new emergency evacuation pamphlet instructing employees what to do during emergency events jointly.
- f.** Several major OSH initiatives were initiated by the International Trade Administration (ITA) in FY 2003, including the establishment of a safety and health council, development of an OSH brochure and OSH poster, quarterly inspections of all ITA workspaces, and brown bag lunches with presentations to promote safety and health.
- g.** The Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) developed and distributed a new OSH Program and Guidelines Manual to CIO employees, and the CIO collateral duty safety officer conducted an OSH inspection of CIO workspaces.
- h.** The Office of Security (OSY) developed and implemented an Occupant

Emergency Plan for Commerce headquarters Herbert C. Hoover Building employees for the safe evacuation or shelter-in-place of employees, contractors and visitors in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. Additionally, OSY procured escape hoods to be used for emergency evacuation in the event of a chemical attack.

**b. Occupational Safety and Health Awareness and Training**

**1. Occupational Safety and Health Awareness**

- a. Monthly *Occupational Safety and Health Reports* were prepared and posted on the Department's website to provide current OSH information and guidance to employees on a broad range of topics. These topics included how to avoid slip and fall accidents, proper use of hazardous chemicals, the importance of wearing seat belts, ergonomics, proper use of personal protective equipment, and other similar topics.
- b. Numerous Broadcast e-mails were sent to all Commerce employees, which covered a broad range of OSH subjects. Included were messages to promote safety in the workplaces and encourage safe behavior, instructions on measures to take in the event of an emergency, guidance to prevent exposure to anthrax and other potential contaminants in incoming mail, tips on how to prevent slips and falls accidents, precautions to take after visiting locations which have reported a SARs outbreak, and other such subjects.
- c. At the Bureau of the Census, messages pertaining to vehicular safety, prevention of slips and falls accidents, hurricane preparedness, safe winter driving, proper lifting techniques and other such subjects were provided to employees via broadcast e-mails. Additionally, a variety of safety posters were distributed Bureau-wide to be prominently displayed.
- d. At NIST, more than 300 employees and associates attended the 2003 Health and Safety Fair, sponsored by the Division of Administration and Chief Financial Officer Safety Committee, Occupational Health and Safety Division, and Plant Division at its Gaithersburg, Maryland headquarters campus. The fair included specific OSH training modules designed for the trade and craft employees.
- e. A new Occupational Safety and Health Policy was developed at NOAA to reflect the recently upgraded restructuring of the OSH program, underscore NOAA's

commitment to safety and health, and encourage employees to comply with applicable OSH policies and directives.

- f. ITA developed a new brochure, which provides ITA employees safety and occupational health guidance, instructions about how to report unsafe or unhealthful conditions, and what actions to take in the event of an emergency. Additionally, safety awareness messages were incorporated into the monthly ITA newsletter.
- g. Other Departmental bureaus implemented a wide variety of new measures to enhance safety and occupational health awareness within their organizations. These measures included the development of new OSH policy and procedures manuals, new OSH pages on bureau websites, promulgation of OSH standards and guidelines for specific operations, posting of OSH posters in prominent locations, including an OSH segment in staff meetings, and other such measures.

## **2. Occupational Safety and Health Training**

Extensive safety and occupational health training was conducted in FY 2003 throughout the Department to assure that workers, supervisors, and OSH committee members received appropriate job safety and health awareness and hazard recognition training. Some examples of the OSH training include:

- a. The Department's Office of Occupational Safety and Health hosted an Executive Leadership Workshop for the Commerce Safety and Health Council, which was provided by a safety-consulting firm. This workshop was an interactive learning experience and focused on the essential elements of effective safety management. Other OSH training conducted at Commerce headquarters included a new course, "Safety and Health Training for New Supervisors", an OSH segment in the New Employee Orientation, Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation/Automated External Defibrillator (CPR/AED), use of Evacuation Chairs for the physically disabled, Shelter-In-Place in the event of a chemical or biological attack, Bloodborne Pathogens, and how to conduct workplace safety and health inspections for collateral duty OSH personnel.
- b. NIST provided DuPont's "Executive Leadership Workshop" to all NIST Operating Unit directors and deputy directors. This training focused on OSH management and workplace safety and health. NIST also provided Incident Investigation and Root Cause Analysis training for all NIST supervisors and line

supervisors in the Director of Administration and Chief Financial Officer directorate. Other OSH training at NIST included Overhead Crane Operation, radiation safety training for 591 guest scientists and visitors, Radiation Risk, Awareness and Control training for 20 first responders, and training in emergency response procedures for the NIST nuclear reactor.

- c. At NOAA approximately \$1,000,000 was allocated for OSH training for NOAA employees during FY 2003. This training included 700 executives or senior managers who received the two day DuPont OSH training program, 800 mid-level managers who received the NOAA STAR (Stop Taking Avoidable Risks) OSH training program, and all other NOAA employees who took web-based NOAA OSH training. Additionally, field training was provided for specific areas of concern, such as Fall Protection, Personal Protective Equipment, CPR/AED, and hazardous weather training for employees who work at remote sites.
- d. The Bureau of the Census provided a broad range of safety and health awareness training and educational programs to its employees during FY 2003. At the National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, Indiana, Lockout/Tagout training was provided for 72 facility employees who repair and maintain machinery and equipment. Division Safety Representatives received refresher training on hazardous materials recognition and documentation. Census Director Charles Kincannon required all managers and supervisors to certify they have read the Emergency Response brochures, and that their employees are familiar with building evacuation procedures, evacuation routes, and the location of assembly areas. The Census safety staff presented an overview of supervisory OSH duties for new supervisors at quarterly Human Resources Management training sessions.
- e. OSH training was also conducted at many of the other Commerce bureaus, which included training in emergency evacuation procedures, use of Escape Hoods, firearm control and usage for law enforcement officers, CPR/AED training, asbestos certification, lead awareness, electrical safety, and various other subjects.

## **c. Inspections and Assessments**

### **1. Inspections**

Quarterly safety and health workplace inspections were conducted at Census bureau headquarters by Collateral Duty Safety Representatives, and were conducted annually by the Census safety staff. At the Census Bureau's Hagerstown, Maryland, Telephone

Center, indoor air quality tests were conducted in response to employee complaints. All workplaces were inspected at the NIST main facilities in Gaithersburg, Maryland and their laboratories in Boulder, Colorado, in FY 2003. Workplaces inspections were performed at many NOAA facilities in FY 2003. All workplaces were inspected at the main Commerce headquarters building in FY 2003.

## **2. Assessments**

Safety and health oversight audits were conducted at four major Commerce facilities by Departmental occupational safety and health staff to measure the effectiveness of OSH programs, identify major deficiencies, and determine compliance with applicable safety and health standards. Safety and health surveys were posted on the Department's Intranet to provide employees with a means to express their concerns regarding the effectiveness of the OSH programs at their worksites and provide feedback on the progress of implementation of new OSH programs. Injury and illness data was analyzed at Commerce headquarters and at major bureaus to identify the major causes of accidents and injuries and the corrective action taken. At NIST, the Technologies Services Operating Unit contracted with an outside auditing firm to conduct an OSH audit of their operation and provide recommendations. Also at NIST, the Chemical Science and Technology Laboratory and the Electronics and Electrical Engineering Laboratory participated in benchmarking with the DuPont Corporation to conduct oversight audits of essential elements of OSH management within these organizations.

### **d. Accomplishments in Providing Recognition to Outstanding Achievers**

1. At NIST, all employees in the Office of Director of Administration and Chief Financial Officer had OSH included as a critical element within their performance plans. Also at NIST, an Annual Safety Award was presented to a cross-functional team that performed a risk analysis for the Physics Laboratories. Other organizations within NIST provided similar awards for outstanding OSH performance in FY 2003.
2. At the Bureau of the Census, a Annual Award program to encourage safe driving practices in the field was established. During FY 2003, the New York region had no reportable vehicular accidents, and was nominated for this award. Also at Census, a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to employees who have provided major support to the Bureau's OSH program.
3. At NOAA, a system was established to recognize facilities in which the least workplace deficiencies were identified during OSH assessments. In fiscal year 2003, three such

workplaces were awarded the “Best of the Best” bronze medals.

**e. OSH Plans and Goals for Fiscal Year 2004 and the Coming Years**

For FY 2004 and beyond, the Department of Commerce will continue to focus on reducing workplace injuries and their associated costs by implementing the President’s Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) initiative.

Currently, the Office of Occupational Safety and Health (OOSH) has four ongoing initiatives that address the SHARE goals. First, OOSH plans to revitalize the major bureau and agency monthly occupational safety and health meeting. The committee will identify deficient areas and areas of opportunity, such as Total Cost Rate, and will develop methodologies to track, measure and produce tangible results to meet the Department’s targets. These results will be reported by bureau at the quarterly OSH Council.

Second, to reduce lost-time case rates and lost production workdays OOSH is working with the DOC Office of Acquisition Management (OAM) to ensure the DOC Health Unit Physician will act as the Department’s representative to reconcile new OWCP cases to help reduce workers’ compensation costs and bring people back to work. Third, OOSH is working to transfer long-term workers’ compensation cases to the existing short-term workers’ compensation contract to ensure full time focus on long-term workers’ compensation cases to return employees to work.

Lastly, to improve timeliness of workers’ compensation reporting of injuries and illnesses to the Office of Workers’ Compensation Program, the Department is working with DOL to utilize its Safety and Health Information Management System (SHIMS) to expedite workers’ compensation claims, reduce reporting requirements, and standardize incident reporting throughout the Department.

At NIST, several new OSH programs and initiatives are planned for implementation in FY 2004. The major initiatives include implementation of an ergonomic program, finalization of procedures for a Light Duty Program, provide OSH training for collateral duty safety personnel, conduct a Safety and Health Fair, establish a new NIST Safety Operations Committee, conduct Plans Review of a new 500,000 square foot research facility, and conduct a Construction Safety Awareness Class.

At the Bureau of the Census, a broad range of new OSH initiatives will be implemented. These include the establishment of a program to account for employees following building evacuations, provide input to the New Building Committee to include OSH considerations during design stages, especially in regard for the needs of persons with disabilities, develop updated

accident/injury reporting forms, conduct Shelter-In-Place drills at Washington DC, area facilities, and train regional safety personnel on revised OSHA standards for reporting of injuries and illnesses.

At NOAA, many new initiatives will be undertaken in FY 2004 in response to the comprehensive audit conducted of their OSH program by an outside auditor. These initiatives include the development and implementation of a new NOAA OSH policy, and over seventy major recommendations resulting from the audit. Additionally, increased training will be conducted which will focus on the Occupational Risk Management Process.

**f. Recommendations for OSHA's Office of Federal Agency Programs**

It is recommended that communication between DOL Workers' Compensation investigative staff and agency OSH offices be improved to ensure that only legitimate Workers' Compensation claims are paid. Additionally, it is recommended that procedures be reviewed with Office of Workers' Compensation Program to decrease the amount of time Workers' Compensation claimants are required to wait before payment.